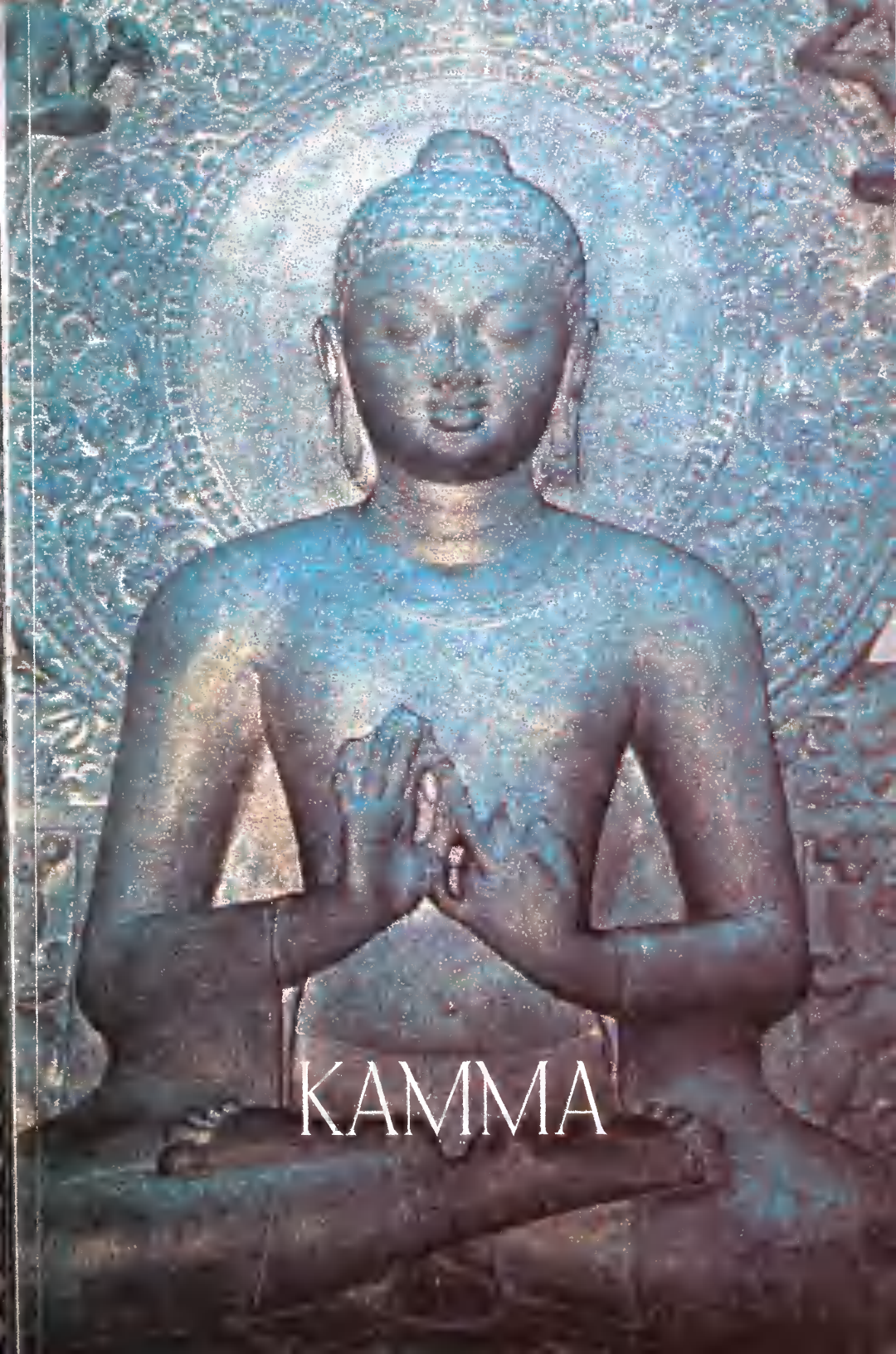
KAMMA

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KAMMA

A Study Guide

prepared by

Thanissaro Bhikkhu

for free distribution

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INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of kamma (*karma*—action) is one of the Buddha's central teachings. There is a modern myth that he simply picked up his ideas on kamma from the worldview prevalent in his day, and that they aren't really integral to his message. Nothing could be further from the truth. Early Buddhists often cited the Buddha's teaching on kamma as one of the prime teachings that set him apart from his contemporaries, and a study of his teachings on kamma will show that they underlie everything else he taught.

The following readings from the Pali Canon are designed to give an overview of the Buddha's teachings on kamma. Before tackling them, you might want to read a few introductory articles on the topic, including the two appendices included here—"Karma" and "Samsara Divided by Zero"—along with article, "A Refuge in Skillful Action" (contained in the book, *Refuge)* available at Access to Insight (www.accesstoinsight.org).

The readings here are divided into three main sections:

I. Non-Buddhist theories
II. Skillfulness
III. Kamma

The first section provides background for the Buddhist teachings on kamma by showing how the early Buddhists viewed the way other contemporary schools of thought explained kamma.

The second section focuses on the Buddha's basic observation that underlay his teachings on kamma: that it is possible to develop a skill. This simple fact carries a number of important implications for any teaching on action. (1) Actions give results, and their results follow a

discernible pattern. Otherwise, it would not be possible to develop a skill. (2) Some results are more desirable than others. Otherwise, there would be no point in developing a skill. (3) By observing one's mistakes one may learn from them and use that knowledge to act more skillfully in the future. This means that the mind is a crucial agent in determining actions and their results, and there is an opening for feedback to influence the process of action. It is thus a non-linear process, and there is room for free will. (4) Results can be observed while one is acting, as well as after the action is done. This means that actions have both immediate results and long-term results, a fact that makes the non-linear process very complex.

The passages in the second section discuss how these observations apply in practice. §5 discusses how the Buddha applied the principle of skillfulness to reach Awakening. §7 shows how to it to decide what teachings are valid. §8 discusses how to apply it to all of one's actions. The remaining passages are self-explanatory.

The third section, on kamma, consists of passages that build a larger theory of action based on these observations. These passages are divided into three sub-sections, based on a classification given in §14:

A. Kamma & Causes
B. Results
C. Diversity & Cessation

Sub-section A is the most theoretical part of this study guide. It covers the Buddha's basic theory of causation (§15) and treats the place of intention—the factor that the Buddha identified as the essence of kamma—in the context of the Buddha's analysis of physical and mental phenomena (name-&-form). In the light of the Buddha's observation in §5 that views influence kamma (views come under attention in the analysis of "name"), this sub-section concludes with two levels of right view: mundane right view, which informs the sort of good kamma that brings

about happy results within the process of death and rebirth; and transcendent right view, which informs the sort of kamma that brings freedom from that process.

Sub-section B focuses on the issue of how long it takes for the results of kamma to appear, and gives particular attention to some of the complexities that arise from the fact that kamma is non-linear. Sometimes the results of an action don't appear immediately, or even in the immediate next life. §27 discusses the role that the mind plays in determining how the results of kamma are experienced, and §28 treats the intelligent way to use the Buddha's teachings on kamma when reflecting on one's own past bad kamma so as to train oneself in the proper frame of mind.

Sub-section C is divided into two further sub-sections, based on a classification in § 29:

1. Dark Kamma, White Kamma
2. Kamma Neither Dark nor White

The first of these two sub-sections discusses types of actions and mental qualities that lead to good or bad results within the process of rebirth and death. In some passages the emphasis is on results in the present life; in others, on results in future lives. The second of these two sub-sections discusses the type of kamma—and the right views underlying that kamma—leading to freedom: the cessation of kamma, the realization of nibbana. The concluding passages make the point that transcendent right view contains the seeds for its own transcendence: once it has done its duty in cutting away other attachments, it creates the momentum so that the mind can then abandon attachment to views of any sort, right or wrong, mundane or transcendent. That is how true freedom is gained.

I. NON-BUDDHIST THEORIES

§ 1. "Monks, there are these three sectarian guilds that—when cross-examined, pressed for reasons, & rebuked by wise people—even though they may explain otherwise, remain stuck in [a doctrine of] inactivity. Which three?

"There are priests & contemplatives who hold this teaching, hold this view: 'Whatever a person experiences—pleasant, painful, or neither pleasant nor painful—that is all caused by what was done in the past.' There are priests & contemplatives who hold this teaching, hold this view: 'Whatever a person experiences—pleasant, painful, or neither pleasant nor painful—that is all caused by a supreme being's act of creation.' There are priests & contemplatives who hold this teaching, hold this view: 'Whatever a person experiences—pleasant, painful, or neither pleasant nor painful—that is all without cause & without condition.'

"Having approached the priests & contemplatives who hold that ... whatever a person experiences ... is all caused by what was done in the past,' I said to them: 'Is it true that you hold that ... whatever a person experiences ... is all caused by what was done in the past?' Thus asked by me, they admitted, 'Yes.' Then I said to them, 'Then in that case, a person is a killer of living beings because of what was done in the past. A person is a thief ... unchaste ... a liar ... a divisive speaker ... an abusive speaker ... an idle chatterer ... covetous ... malevolent ... a holder of wrong views because of what was done in the past.' When one falls back on what was done in the past as being essential, monks, there is no desire, no effort [at the thought], 'This should be done. This shouldn't be done.' When one can't pin down as a truth or reality what should & shouldn't be done, one dwells bewildered & unprotected. One cannot righteously refer to oneself as a contemplative. ...

"Having approached the priests & contemplatives who hold that ... whatever a person experiences ... is all caused by a supreme being's act of creation,' I said to them: 'Is it true that you hold that ... whatever a person experiences ... is all caused by a supreme being's act of creation?' Thus asked by me, they admitted, 'Yes.' Then I said to them, 'Then in that case, a person is a killer of living beings ... a holder of wrong views because of a supreme being's act of creation.' When one falls back on a supreme being's act of creation as being essential, monks, there is no desire, no effort [at the thought], 'This should be done. This shouldn't be done.' When one can't pin down as a truth or reality what should & shouldn't be done, one dwells bewildered & unprotected. One cannot righteously refer to oneself as a contemplative....

"Having approached the priests & contemplatives who hold that ... whatever a person experiences ... is all without cause, without condition,' I said to them: 'Is it true that you hold that ... whatever a person experiences ... is all without cause, without condition?' Thus asked by me, they admitted, 'Yes.' Then I said to them, 'Then in that case, a person is a killer of living beings without cause, without condition. A person is a thief ... unchaste ... a liar ... a divisive speaker ... an abusive speaker ... an idle chatterer ... covetous ... malevolent... a holder of wrong views without cause, without condition.' When one falls back on lack of cause and lack of condition as being essential, monks, there is no desire, no effort [at the thought], 'This should be done. This shouldn't be done.' When one can't pin down as a truth or reality what should & shouldn't be done, one dwells bewildered & unprotected. One cannot righteously refer to oneself as a contemplative."

—*AN III.61*

§ 2. King Ajatasattu: "Purana Kassapa said to me, 'Great king, in acting or getting others to act, in mutilating or getting others to mutilate, in torturing or getting others to torture, in inflicting sorrow or in getting others to inflict sorrow, in tormenting or getting others to torment, in

intimidating or getting others to intimidate, in taking life, taking what is not given, breaking into houses, plundering wealth, committing burglary, ambushing highways, committing adultery, speaking lies—one does no evil. If with a razor-edged disk one were to turn all the living beings on this earth to a single heap of flesh, a single pile of flesh, there would be no evil from that cause, no coming of evil. Even if one were to go along the right bank of the Ganges, killing and getting others to kill, mutilating and getting others to mutilate, torturing and getting others to torture, there would be no evil from that cause, no coming of evil. Even if one were to go along the left bank of the Ganges, killing and getting others to kill, mutilating and getting others to mutilate, torturing and getting others to torture, there would be no evil from that cause, no coming of evil. Through generosity, self-control, restraint, and truthful speech there is no merit from that cause, no coming of merit' ....

"Ajita Kesakambala said to me, 'Great king, there is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed. There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions. There is no this world, no next world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously reborn beings; no priests or contemplatives who, faring rightly and practicing rightly, proclaim this world and the next after having directly known and realized it for themselves. A person is a composite of four primary elements. At death, the earth (in the body) returns to and merges with the (external) earth-substance. The fire returns to and merges with the external fire-substance. The liquid returns to and merges with the external liquid-substance. The wind returns to and merges with the external wind-substance. The sense-faculties scatter into space. Four men, with the bier as the fifth, carry the corpse. Its eulogies are sounded only as far as the charnel ground. The bones turn pigeon-colored. The offerings end in ashes. Generosity is taught by idiots. The words of those who speak of existence after death are false, empty chatter. With the break-up of the body, the wise and the foolish alike are annihilated, destroyed. They do not exist after death' ....

"Pakudha Kaccayana said to me, 'Great king, there are these seven substances—unmade, irreducible, uncreated, without a creator, barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar—that do not alter, do not change, do not interfere with one another, are incapable of causing one another pleasure, pain, or both pleasure and pain. Which seven? The earth-substance, the liquid-substance, the fire-substance, the wind-substance, pleasure, pain, and the soul as the seventh. These are the seven substances.... And among them there is no killer nor one who causes killing, no hearer nor one who causes hearing, no cognizer nor one who causes cognition. When one cuts off [another person's] head, there is no one taking anyone's life. It is simply between the seven substances that the sword passes.'"

—*DN 2*

§ 3. "There are, monks, some contemplatives & priests who, being asked questions regarding this or that, resort to verbal contortions, to eel-like wriggling, on four grounds.... There is the case of a certain priest or contemplative who does not discern as it actually is that 'This is skillful,' or that 'This is unskillful.' The thought occurs to him: 'I don't discern as it actually is that "This is skillful," or that "This is unskillful." If I...were to declare that "This is skillful," or that "This is unskillful," desire, passion, aversion, or irritation would occur to me; that would be a falsehood for me. Whatever would be a falsehood for me would be a distress for me. Whatever would be a distress for me would be an obstacle for me.' So, out of fear of falsehood, a loathing for falsehood, he does not declare that 'This is skillful,' or that 'This is unskillful.' Being asked questions regarding this or that, he resorts to verbal contortions, to eel-like wriggling: 'I don't think so. I don't think in that way. I don't think otherwise. I don't think not. I don't think not not.'

(The second case is virtually identical with the first, substituting 'clinging' for 'falsehood.')

"There is the case of a certain priest or contemplative who does not discern as it actually is that 'This is skillful,' or that 'This is unskillful'....'If I, not discerning as it actually is that "This is skillful," or that "This is unskillful," were to declare that "This is skillful," or that "This is unskillful"—There are priests and contemplatives who are pundits, subtle, skilled in debate, who prowl about like hair-splitting marksmen, as it were, shooting philosophical positions to pieces with their dialectic. They might cross-question me, press me for reasons, rebuke me. I might not be able to stand my ground, that would be a distress for me...an obstacle for me.' So, out of a fear for questioning, a loathing for questioning...he resorts to verbal contortions, to eel-like wriggling....

"There is the case of a certain priest or contemplative who is dull & exceedingly stupid. Out of dullness & exceeding stupidity, he—being asked questions regarding this or that—resorts to verbal contortions, to eel-like wriggling: 'If you ask me if there exists another world [after death], if I thought that there exists another world, would I declare that to you? I don't think so. I don't think in that way. I don't think otherwise. I don't think not. I don't think not not. If you asked me if there isn't another world...both is & isn't...neither is nor isn't...if there are beings who transmigrate...if there aren't...both are & aren't... neither are nor aren't...if the Tathagata exists after death... doesn't...both... neither...I don't think so. I don't think in that way. I don't think otherwise. I don't think not. I don't think not not.'"

—*DN 1*

II. SKILLFULNESS

§ 4. "Abandon what is unskillful, monks. It's possible to abandon what is unskillful. If it were not possible to abandon what is unskillful, I would not say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.' But because it is possible to abandon what is unskillful, I say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.' If this abandoning of what is unskillful were conducive to harm & suffering, I would not say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.' But because this abandoning of what is unskillful is conducive to benefit & happiness, I say to you, 'Abandon what is unskillful.'

"Develop what is skillful, monks. It's possible to develop what is skillful. If it were not possible to develop what is skillful, I would not say to you, 'Develop what is skillful.' But because it is possible to develop what is skillful, I say to you, 'Develop what is skillful.' If this development of what is skillful were conducive to harm & suffering, I would not say to you, 'Develop what is skillful.' But because this development of what is skillful is conducive to benefit & happiness, I say to you, 'Develop what is skillful.'"

—*AN II.19*

§ 5. "Before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened Bodhisatta, the thought occurred to me: 'Why don't I keep dividing my thinking into two classes?' So I made thinking imbued with sensuality, thinking imbued with malevolence, & thinking imbued with harmfulness one class, and thinking imbued with renunciation, thinking imbued with non-malevolence, & thinking imbued with harmlessness another class.

"And as I remained thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, thinking imbued with sensuality arose. I discerned that

'Thinking imbued with sensuality has arisen in me; and that leads to my own affliction or to the affliction of others or to the affliction of both. It obstructs discernment, promotes vexation, & does not lead to Unbinding.'

"As I noticed that it leads to my own affliction, it subsided. As I noticed that it leads to the affliction of others...to the affliction of both...it obstructs discernment, promotes vexation, & does not lead to Unbinding, it subsided. Whenever thinking imbued with sensuality had arisen, I simply abandoned it, destroyed it, dispelled it, wiped it out of existence. (Similarly with thinking imbued with malevolence & harmfulness.)

"Whatever a monk keeps pursuing with his thinking & pondering, that becomes the inclination of his awareness. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with sensuality, abandoning thinking imbued with renunciation, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with sensuality. (Similarly with thinking imbued with malevolence & harmfulness.)

"Just as in the last month of the Rains, in the autumn season when the crops are ripening, a cowherd would look after his cows: He would tap & poke & check & curb them with a stick on this side & that. Why is that? Because he foresees flogging or imprisonment or a fine or public censure arising from that [if he let his cows wander into the crops]. In the same way I foresaw in unskillful qualities drawbacks, degradation, & defilement, and I foresaw in skillful qualities rewards related to renunciation & promoting cleansing.

"And as I remained thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, thinking imbued with renunciation arose. I discerned that 'Thinking imbued with renunciation has arisen in me; and that leads neither to my own affliction, nor to the affliction of others, nor to the affliction of both. It fosters discernment, promotes lack of vexation, & leads to Unbinding. If I were to think & ponder in line with that even for a night...even for a day...even for a day & night, I do not envision any danger that would come from it, except that thinking & pondering a long time would tire the body. When the body is tired, the

mind is disturbed; and a disturbed mind is far from concentration.' So I steadied my mind right within, settled, unified, & concentrated it. Why is that? So that my mind would not be disturbed. (Similarly with thinking imbued with non-malevolence & harmlessness.)

"Whatever a monk keeps pursuing with his thinking & pondering, that becomes the inclination of his awareness. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with renunciation, abandoning thinking imbued with sensuality, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with renunciation. (Similarly with thinking imbued with non-malevolence & harmlessness.)

"Just as in the last month of the hot season, when all the crops have been gathered into the village, a cowherd would look after his cows: While resting under the shade of a tree or out in the open, he simply keeps himself mindful of 'those cows.' In the same way, I simply kept myself mindful of 'those mental qualities.'

"Unflagging persistence was aroused in me, and unmuddled mindfulness established. My body was calm & unaroused, my mind concentrated & single. Quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful mental qualities, I entered & remained in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thought & evaluation, I entered & remained in the second jhana: rapture & pleasure born of composure, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation— internal assurance. With the fading of rapture I remained in equanimity, mindful & alert, and physically sensitive of pleasure. I entered & remained in the third jhana, of which the Noble Ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasurable abiding.' With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—I entered & remained in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain.

"When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, &

attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the *knowledge of recollecting my past lives.* I recollected my manifold past lives, i.e., one birth, two...five, ten...fifty, a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand, many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction & expansion: 'There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.' Thus I remembered my manifold past lives in their modes & details.

"This was the first knowledge I attained in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose—as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute.

"When the mind was thus concentrated ... & attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the *knowledge of the passing away & reappearance of beings.* I saw—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away & re-appearing, and I discerned how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: 'These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech & mind, who reviled the Noble Ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, & mind, who did not revile the Noble Ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the good destinations, in the heavenly world.' Thus—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—I saw beings passing away & re-appearing, and I discerned how they are

inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma.

"This was the second knowledge I attained in the second watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose—as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute.

"When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the *knowledge of the ending of mental fermentations.* I discerned, as it was actually present, that 'This is stress...This is the origination of stress...This is the cessation of stress...This is the way leading to the cessation of stress...These are fermentations... This is the origination of fermentations...This is the cessation of fermentations... This is the way leading to the cessation of fermentations.' My heart, thus knowing, thus seeing, was released from the fermentation of sensuality, released from the fermentation of becoming, released from the fermentation of ignorance. With release, there was the knowledge, 'Released.' I discerned that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'

"This was the third knowledge I attained in the third watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose—as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute."

—*MN 19*

§ 6. The non-doing of any evil,
the performance of what's skillful,
the cleansing of one's own mind:
This is the Buddhas' teaching.

—*Dhp 183*

§ 7. As they were sitting to one side, the Kalamas of Kesaputta said to the Blessed One, "Venerable sir, there are some priests & contemplatives who come to Kesaputta. They expound & glorify their own doctrines, but as for the doctrines of others, they deprecate them, revile them, show contempt for them, & disparage them. And then other priests & contemplatives come to Kesaputta. They expound & glorify their own doctrines, but as for the doctrines of others, they deprecate them, revile them, show contempt for them, & disparage them. They leave us simply uncertain & doubtful: Which of these venerable priests & contemplatives are speaking the truth, and which ones are lying?"

"Of course you are uncertain, Kalamas. Of course you are doubtful. When there are reasons for doubt, uncertainty is born. So in this case, Kalamas, don't go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, 'This contemplative is our teacher.' When you know for yourselves that, 'These qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to harm & to suffering'—then you should abandon them...

"What do you think, Kalamas: when greed arises in a person, does it arise for benefit or for harm?"

"For harm, lord."

"And this greedy person, overcome by greed, his mind possessed by greed: doesn't he kill living beings, take what is not given, go after another person's wife, tell lies, and induce others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term harm & suffering?"

"Yes, lord."

(Similarly for aversion & delusion.)

So what do you think, Kalamas: are these qualities skillful or unskillful?"

"Unskillful, lord."

"Blameworthy or blameless?"

"Blameworthy, lord."

"Criticized by the wise or praised by the wise?"

"Criticized by the wise, lord."

"When adopted & carried out, do they lead to harm & suffering, or not?"

"When adopted & carried out, they lead to harm & to suffering..."

"...Now, Kalamas, don't go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, 'This contemplative is our teacher.' When you know for yourselves that, 'These qualities are skillful; these qualities are blameless; these qualities are praised by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to benefit & to happiness'—then you should enter & remain in them.

"What do you think, Kalamas: when lack of greed arises in a person, does it arise for benefit or for harm?"

"For benefit, lord."

"And this ungreedy person, not overcome by greed, his mind not possessed by greed: he doesn't kill living beings, take what is not given, go after another person's wife, tell lies, or induce others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term benefit & happiness—right?"

"Yes, lord."

(Similarly for lack of aversion & lack of delusion.)

So what do you think, Kalamas: are these qualities skillful or unskillful?"

"Skillful, lord."

"Blameworthy or blameless?"

"Blameless, lord."

"Criticized by the wise or praised by the wise?"

"Praised by the wise, lord."

"When adopted & carried out, do they lead to benefit & to happiness, or not?"

"When adopted & carried out, they lead to benefit & to happiness...."

—*AN III.65*

§ 8. The Buddha: "What do you think, Rahula: What is a mirror for?"

Rahula: "For reflection, sir."

The Buddha: "In the same way, Rahula, bodily acts, verbal acts, & mental acts are to be done with repeated reflection.

"Whenever you want to perform a bodily act, you should reflect on it: 'This bodily act I want to perform—would it lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful bodily act, with painful consequences, painful results?' If, on reflection, you know that it would lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it would be an unskillful bodily act with painful consequences, painful results, then any bodily act of that sort is absolutely unfit for you to do. But if on reflection you know that it would not cause affliction...it would be a skillful bodily act with happy consequences, happy results, then any bodily act of that sort is fit for you to do. (Similarly with verbal acts & mental acts.)

"While you are performing a bodily act, you should reflect on it: 'This bodily act I am doing—is it leading to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful bodily act, with painful consequences, painful results?' If, on reflection, you know that it is leading to self-affliction, to affliction of others, or both...you should give it up. But if on reflection you know that it is not...you may continue with it. (Similarly with verbal acts & mental acts.)

"Having performed a bodily act, you should reflect on it....If, on reflection, you know that it led to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it was an unskillful bodily act with painful consequences, painful results, then you should confess it, reveal it, lay it open to the Teacher or to a knowledgeable companion in the holy life. Having confessed it...you should exercise restraint in the future. But if on reflection you know that it did not lead to affliction...it was a skillful bodily act with happy consequences, happy results, then you should stay mentally refreshed & joyful, training day & night in skillful mental qualities. (Similarly with verbal acts.)

"Having performed a mental act, you should reflect on it....If, on reflection, you know that it led to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it was an unskillful mental act with painful consequences, painful results, then you should feel horrified, humiliated, & disgusted with it. Feeling horrified... you should exercise restraint in the future. But if on reflection you know that it did not lead to affliction...it was a skillful mental act with happy consequences, happy results, then you should stay mentally refreshed & joyful, training day & night in skillful mental qualities.

"Rahula, all the priests & contemplatives in the course of the past who purified their bodily acts, verbal acts, & mental acts, did it through repeated reflection on their bodily acts, verbal acts, & mental acts in just this way.

"All the priests & contemplatives in the course of the future .... All the priests & contemplatives at present who purify their bodily acts, verbal acts, & mental acts, do it through repeated reflection on their bodily acts, verbal acts, & mental acts in just this way.

"So, Rahula, you should train yourself: 'I will purify my bodily acts ... verbal acts ... my mental acts through repeated reflection.' That's how you should train yourself."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Rahula delighted in the Blessed One's words.

—*MN 61*

§ 9. "Now what is unskillful? Taking life is unskillful, taking what is not given ... sexual misconduct ... lying ... abusive speech ... divisive tale-bearing ... idle chatter is unskillful. Covetousness ... malevolence ... wrong views are unskillful. These things are termed unskillful.

"And what are the roots of unskillful things? Greed ... aversion ... delusion .... These are termed the roots of unskillful things.

"And what is skillful? Abstaining from taking life is skillful, abstaining from taking what is not given ... from sexual misconduct ... from lying ... from abusive speech ...

from divisive tale-bearing ... abstaining from idle chatter is skillful. Lack of covetousness ... lack of malevolence ... right views are skillful. These things are termed skillful.

"And what are the roots of skillful things? Lack of greed ... lack of aversion ... lack of delusion .... These are termed the roots of skillful things."

—*MN 9*

§ 10. "Now, Cunda, there are three ways in which one is made pure by bodily action, four ways in which one is made pure by verbal action, and three ways in which one is made pure by mental action.

"And how is one made pure in three ways by bodily action? There is the case where a certain person, abandoning the taking of life, *abstains from taking life.* He dwells with his rod laid down, his knife laid down, scrupulous, merciful, compassionate for the benefit of all living beings. Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he *abstains from taking what is not given.* He does not take, in the manner of a thief, things in a village or a wilderness that belong to others and have not been given by them. Abandoning illicit sex, he *abstains from illicit sex.* He does not get sexually involved with those who are protected by their mothers, their fathers, their brothers, their sisters, their relatives, or their Dhamma; those with husbands, those who entail punishments, or even those crowned with flowers by another man. This is how one is made pure in three ways by bodily action.

"And how is one made pure in four ways by verbal action? There is the case where a certain person, abandoning false speech, *abstains from false speech.* When he has been called to a town meeting, a group meeting, a gathering of his relatives, his guild, or of the royalty, if he is asked as a witness, 'Come & tell, good man, what you know': If he doesn't know, he says, 'I don't know.' If he does know, he says, 'I know.' If he hasn't seen, he says, 'I haven't seen.' If he has seen, he says, 'I have seen.' Thus he doesn't consciously tell a lie for his own sake, for the sake of

another, or for the sake of any reward. Abandoning false speech, he abstains from false speech. He speaks the truth, holds to the truth, is firm, reliable, no deceiver of the world. Abandoning divisive speech, he *abstains from divisive speech.* What he has heard here he does not tell there to break those people apart from these people here. What he has heard there he does not tell here to break these people apart from those people there. Thus reconciling those who have broken apart or cementing those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord, speaks things that create concord. Abandoning abusive speech, he *abstains from abusive speech.* He speaks words that are soothing to the ear, that are affectionate, that go to the heart, that are polite, appealing & pleasing to people at large. Abandoning idle chatter, he *abstains from idle chatter.* He speaks in season, speaks what is factual, what is in accordance with the goal, the Dhamma, & the Vinaya. He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, reasonable, circumscribed, connected with the goal. This is how one is made pure in four ways by verbal action.

"And how is one made pure in three ways by mental action? There is the case where a certain person *is not covetous.* He does not covet the belongings of others, thinking, 'O, that what belongs to others would be mine!' He *bears no malevolence* and is not corrupt in the resolves of his heart. [He thinks,] 'May these beings be free from animosity, free from oppression, free from trouble, and may they look after themselves with ease!' He *has right view* and is not warped in the way he sees things: 'There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed. There are fruits & results of good & bad actions. There is this world & the next world. There is mother & father. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are priests & contemplatives who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is how one is made pure in three ways by mental action.

"These, Cunda, are the ten courses of skillful action. When a person is endowed with these ten courses of skillful

action, then even if he gets up at the proper time from his bed and touches the earth, he is still pure. If he doesn't touch the earth, he is still pure. If he touches wet cow dung, he is still pure. If he doesn't touch wet cow dung, he is still pure. If he touches green grass ... If he doesn't touch green grass ... If he worships a fire ... If he doesn't worship a fire ... If he pays homage to the sun with clasped hands ... If he doesn't pay homage to the sun with clasped hands ... If he goes down into the water three times by nightfall ... If he doesn't go down into the water three times by nightfall, he is still pure. Why is that? Because these ten courses of skillful action are pure and cause purity. Furthermore, as a result of being endowed with these ten courses of skillful action, [rebirth among] the devas is declared, [rebirth among] human beings is declared—that or any other good destination."

—*AN X.176*

§ 11. "A fool is characterized by his/her actions. A wise person is characterized by his/her actions. It's through the activities of one's life that one's discernment shines.

"A person endowed with three things is to be recognized as a fool. Which three? Bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, mental misconduct....

"A person endowed with three things is to be recognized as a wise person. Which three? Good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, good mental conduct....

"Thus, monks, you should train yourselves: 'We will avoid the three things that, endowed with which, one is to be recognized as a fool. We will undertake & maintain the three things that, endowed with which, one is to be recognized as a wise person.' That's how you should train yourselves."

—*AN III.2*

§ 12. "There are these four courses of action. Which four? There is the course of action that is unpleasant to do and that, when done, leads to what is unprofitable. There is the course

of action that is unpleasant to do but that, when done, leads to what is profitable. There is the course of action that is pleasant to do but that, when done, leads to what is unprofitable. There is the course of action that is pleasant to do and that, when done, leads to what is profitable.

"Now as for the course of action that is unpleasant to do and that, when done, leads to what is unprofitable, one considers it as not worth doing for both reasons: because the course of action is unpleasant to do ... and because the course of action, when done, leads to what is unprofitable. ...

"As for the course of action that is unpleasant to do but that, when done, leads to what is profitable, it's in light of this course of action that one may be known ... as a wise person or a fool. For a fool doesn't reflect, 'Even though this course of action is unpleasant to do, still when it is done it leads to what is profitable.' So he doesn't do it, and thus the non-doing of that course of action leads to what is unprofitable for him. But a wise person reflects, 'Even though this course of action is unpleasant to do, still when it is done it leads to what is profitable.' So he does it, and thus the doing of that course of action leads to what is profitable for him.

"As for the course of action that is pleasant to do but that, when done, leads to what is unprofitable, it's in light of this course of action that one may be known ... as a wise person or a fool. For a fool doesn't reflect, 'Even though this course of action is pleasant to do, still when it is done it leads to what is unprofitable.' So he does it, and thus the doing of that course of action leads to what is unprofitable for him. But a wise person reflects, 'Even though this course of action is pleasant to do, still when it is done it leads to what is unprofitable.' So he doesn't do it, and thus the non-doing of that course of action leads to what is profitable for him.

"As for the course of action that is pleasant to do and that, when done, leads to what is profitable, one considers it as worth doing for both reasons: because the course of action is pleasant to do ... and because the course of action, when done, leads to what is profitable ....

"These are the four courses of action."

—*AN IV.115*

III. KAMMA

§ 13. Phenomena are preceded by the heart,
ruled by the heart,
made of the heart.
If you speak or act with a corrupted heart,
suffering follows you,
as the wheel of the cart
the track of the ox
that pulls it.

Phenomena are preceded by the heart,
ruled by the heart,
made of the heart.
If you speak or act with a calm, bright heart,
then happiness follows you,
like a shadow
that never leaves.

—*Dhp 1-2*

§ 14. "'Kamma should be known. The cause by which kamma comes into play should be known. The diversity in kamma should be known. The result of kamma should be known. The cessation of kamma should be known. The path of practice leading to the cessation of kamma should be known.' Thus it has been said. Why was it said?

"Intention, I tell you, is kamma. Intending, one does kamma by way of body, speech, & intellect.

"And what is the cause by which kamma comes into play? Contact....

"And what is the diversity in kamma? There is kamma to be experienced in hell, kamma to be experienced in the realm of common animals, kamma to be experienced in the realm of the hungry shades, kamma to be experienced in the human world, kamma to be experienced in the heavenly

worlds. [In the Buddhist cosmology, sojourns in hell or in heaven, as in the other realms, are not eternal. After the force of one's kamma leading to rebirth in those levels has worn out, one is reborn elsewhere.] ...

"And what is the result of kamma? The result of kamma is of three sorts, I tell you: that which arises right here & now, that which arises later [in this lifetime], and that which arises following that....

"And what is the cessation of kamma? From the cessation of contact is the cessation of kamma; and just this noble eightfold path—right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration—is the path of practice leading to the cessation of kamma.

"Now when a disciple of the noble ones discerns kamma in this way, the cause by which kamma comes into play in this way, the diversity of kamma in this way, the result of kamma in this way, the cessation of kamma in this way, & the path of practice leading to the cessation of kamma in this way, then he discerns this penetrative holy life as the cessation of kamma.

—*AN VI.63*

A. Kamma & Causes

§ 15. "When this is, that is. From the arising of this comes the arising of that. When this isn't, that isn't. From the stopping of this comes the stopping of that."

—*AN X.92*

§ 16. "And what is *name-&-form?* Feeling, perception, intention, contact, & attention: This is called name. The four great elements & the form dependent on the four great elements: This is called form. This name & this form are called name-&-form."

—*SN XII.2*

§ 17. "Why do you call it 'form' *(rupa)*? Because it is afflicted *(ruppati)*, it is called 'form.' Afflicted with what? With cold & heat & hunger & thirst, with the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles. Because it is afflicted, it is called form.

"Why do you call it feeling? Because it feels, it is called feeling. What does it feel? It feels pleasure, it feels pain, it feels neither-pleasure-nor-pain. Because it feels, it is called feeling.

"Why do you call it perception? Because it perceives, it is called perception. What does it perceive? It perceives blue, it perceives yellow, it perceives red, it perceives white. Because it perceives, it is called perception.

"Why do you call them fabrications? Because they fabricate fabricated things, they are called fabrications. What do they fabricate into a fabricated thing? From form-ness, they fabricate form into a fabricated thing. From feeling-ness, they fabricate feeling into a fabricated thing. From perception-hood...From fabrication-hood...From consciousness-hood, they fabricate consciousness into a fabricated thing. Because they fabricate fabricated things, they are called fabrications.

"Why do you call it consciousness? Because it cognizes, it is called consciousness. What does it cognize? It cognizes what is sour, bitter, pungent, sweet, alkaline, non-alkaline, salty, & unsalty. Because it cognizes, it is called consciousness."

—*SN XXII.79*

§ 18. And what are fabrications? There are these six classes of intention: intention aimed at sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas. These are called fabrications.

—*SN XXII.56*

§ 19. Three kinds of fabrications: meritorious fabrications [ripening in pleasure], demeritorious fabrications [ripening in pain], & imperturbable fabrications [the formless states of jhana].

—*DN 33*

§ 20. "And how is right view the forerunner? One discerns wrong view as wrong view, and right view as right view. This is one's right view. And what is wrong view? 'There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed. There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions. There is no this world, no next world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously reborn beings; no priests or contemplatives who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is wrong view.

"And what is right view? Right view, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right view with fermentations, siding with merit, resulting in the acquisitions [of becoming]; and there is noble right view, without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"And what is the right view that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions? 'There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed. There are fruits & results of good & bad actions. There is this world & the next world. There is mother & father. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are priests & contemplatives who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.' This is the right view that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions."

—*MN 117*

§ 21. "And what is right view? Knowledge in terms of stress, knowledge in terms of the origination of stress, knowledge in terms of the cessation of stress, knowledge in terms of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This, monks, is called right view."

—*DN 22*

B. Results

§ 22. "These four imponderables are not to be speculated about. Whoever speculates about them would go mad & experience vexation. Which four? The Buddha-range of the Buddhas [i.e., the range of powers a Buddha develops as a result of becoming a Buddha] .... The jhana-range of one absorbed in jhana [i.e., the range of powers that one may obtain while absorbed in jhana] .... The results of kamma .... Speculation about [the first moment, purpose, etc., of] the cosmos is an imponderable that is not to be speculated about. Whoever speculates about these things would go mad & experience vexation."

—*AN IV.77*

§ 23. "What is old kamma? The eye is to be seen as old kamma, fabricated & willed, capable of being felt. The ear ... The nose ... The tongue ... The body ... The intellect is to be seen as old kamma, fabricated & willed, capable of being felt. This is called old kamma.

"And what is new kamma? Whatever kamma one does now with the body, with speech, or with the intellect. This is called new kamma."

—*SN XXXV.145*

§ 24. Moliyasivaka: "There are some priests & contemplatives who are of this doctrine, this view: Whatever an individual feels—pleasure, pain, neither-pleasure-nor-pain—is entirely caused by what was done before. Now what does Ven. Gotama say to that?"

The Buddha: "There are cases where some feelings arise based on bile [i.e., diseases and pains that come from a malfunction of the gall bladder]. You yourself should know

how some feelings arise based on bile. Even the world is agreed on how some feelings arise based on bile. So any priests & contemplatives who are of the doctrine & view that whatever an individual feels—pleasure, pain, neither-pleasure-nor-pain—is entirely caused by what was done before—slip past what they themselves know, slip past what is agreed on by the world. Therefore I say that those priests & contemplatives are wrong.

"There are cases where some feelings arise based on phlegm...based on internal winds...based on a combination of bodily humors...from the change of the seasons...from uneven ('out-of-tune') care of the body...from attacks...from the result of kamma. You yourself should know how some feelings arise from the result of kamma. Even the world is agreed on how some feelings arise from the result of kamma. So any priests & contemplatives who are of the doctrine & view that whatever an individual feels—pleasure, pain, neither pleasure-nor-pain—is entirely caused by what was done before—slip past what they themselves know, slip past what is agreed on by the world. Therefore I say that those priests & contemplatives are wrong."

—*SN XXXVI.21*

§ 25. "There are, headman, some priests & contemplatives who hold a doctrine & view like this: 'All those who kill living beings experience pain & distress in the here & now. All those who take what is not given ... who engage in illicit sex ... who tell lies experience pain & distress in the here & now.'

"Now there is the case where a certain person is seen garlanded & adorned, freshly bathed & groomed, with hair & beard trimmed, enjoying the sensualities of women as if he were a king. They ask about him: 'My good man, what has this man done that he has been garlanded & adorned ... as if he were a king?' They answer: 'My good man, this man attacked the king's enemy and took his life. The king,

gratified with him, rewarded him. That is why he is garlanded & adorned ... as if he were a king.'

"Then there is the case where a certain person is seen bound with a stout rope with his arms pinned tightly against his back, his head shaved bald, marched to a harsh-sounding drum from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, evicted through the south gate, and beheaded to the south of the city. They ask about him: 'My good man, what has this man done that he is bound with a stout rope ... and beheaded to the south of the city?' They answer: 'My good man, this man, an enemy of the king, has taken the life of a man or a woman. That is why the rulers, having had him seized, inflicted such a punishment upon him.'

"Now, what do you think, headman: have you ever seen or heard of such a case?"

"I have seen this, lord, have heard of it, and will hear of it (again in the future)."

"So, headman, when those priests & contemplatives who hold a doctrine and view like this say: 'All those who kill living beings experience pain & distress in the here & now,' do they speak truthfully or falsely?"—"Falsely, lord."

"And those who babble empty falsehood: are they moral or immoral?"

"Immoral, lord."

"And those who are immoral and of evil character: are they practicing wrongly or rightly?"—"Wrongly, lord."

"And those who are practicing wrongly: do they hold wrong view or right view?"—"Wrong view, lord."

"And is it proper to place confidence in those who hold wrong view?"

"No, lord."

"Then, headman, there is the case where a certain person is seen garlanded & adorned ... as if he were a king. They ask about him: 'My good man, what has this man done that he has been garlanded & adorned ... as if he were a king?' They answer: 'My good man, this man attacked the king's enemy and stole a treasure. The king, gratified with him, rewarded him ....'

"Then there is the case where a certain person is seen bound with a stout rope ... and beheaded to the south of the city. They ask about him: 'My good man, what has this man done that he is bound with a stout rope ... and beheaded to the south of the city?' They answer: 'My good man, this man, an enemy of the king, has committed a theft, stealing something from a village or a forest ....'

"Then there is the case where a certain person is seen garlanded & adorned ... as if he were a king. They ask about him: 'My good man, what has this man done that he has been garlanded & adorned ... as if he were a king?' They answer: 'My good man, this man seduced the wives of the king's enemy ....'

"Then there is the case where a certain person is seen bound with a stout rope ... and beheaded to the south of the city. They ask about him: 'My good man, what has this man done that he is bound with a stout rope ... and beheaded to the south of the city?' They answer: 'My good man, this man seduced women & girls of good families ....'

"Then there is the case where a certain person is seen garlanded & adorned ... as if he were a king. They ask about him: 'My good man, what has this man done that he has been garlanded & adorned ... as if he were a king?' They answer: 'My good man, this man made the king laugh with a lie ...'

"Then there is the case where a certain person is seen bound with a stout rope ... and beheaded to the south of the city. They ask about him: 'My good man, what has this man done that he is bound with a stout rope ... and beheaded to the south of the city?' They answer: 'My good man, this man has brought the aims of a householder or a householder's son to ruin with a lie. That is why the rulers, having had him seized, inflicted such a punishment upon him.'

"Now what do you think, headman: have you ever seen or heard of such a case?"

"I have seen this, lord, have heard of it, and will hear of it (again in the future)."

"So, headman, when those priests & contemplatives who hold a doctrine & view like this, say: 'All those who tell lies experience pain & distress in the here & now,' do they speak truthfully or falsely?... Is it proper to place confidence in those who hold wrong view?"—"No, lord."

—*SN XLII.13*

§ 26. "There are four kinds of person to be found in the world. Which four? There is the case where a certain person takes life, takes what is not given (steals), engages in illicit sex, lies, speaks divisively, speaks abusively, engages in idle chatter; is covetous, malevolent, & holds wrong views. On the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell.

"But there is also the case where a certain person takes life...holds wrong views [yet], on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the good destinations, in the heavenly world.

"And there is the case where a certain person abstains from taking life, abstains from taking what is not given...is not covetous, not malevolent, & holds right views. On the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the good destinations, in the heavenly world.

"But there is also the case where a certain person abstains from taking life, abstains from taking what is not given...is not covetous, not malevolent, & holds right views [yet], on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell....

"In the case of the person who takes life...[yet] on the break-up of the body, after death, reappears in the good destinations, in the heavenly world: either earlier he performed fine kamma that is to be felt as pleasant, or later he performed fine kamma that is to be felt as pleasant, or at the time of death he adopted & carried out right views. Because of that, on the break-up of the body, after death, he

reappears in the good destinations, in the heavenly world. But as for the results of taking life...holding wrong views, he will feel them either right here & now, or later [in this lifetime], or following that....

"In the case of the person who abstains from taking life...but on the break-up of the body, after death, reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell: either earlier he performed evil kamma that is to be felt as painful, or later he performed evil kamma that is to be felt as painful, or at the time of death he adopted & carried out wrong views. Because of that, on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. But as for the results of abstaining from taking life...holding right views, he will feel them either right here & now, or later [in this lifetime], or following that...."

—*MN 136*

§ 27. "Monks, for anyone who says, 'In whatever way a person makes kamma, that is how it is experienced,' there is no living of the holy life, there is no opportunity for the right ending of stress. But for anyone who says, 'When a person makes kamma to be felt in such & such a way, that is how its result is experienced,' there is the living of the holy life, there is the opportunity for the right ending of stress.

"There is the case where a trifling evil deed done by a certain individual takes him to hell. There is the case where the very same sort of trifling deed done by another individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

"Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual takes him to hell? There is the case where a certain individual is undeveloped in [contemplating] the body, undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment: restricted, small-hearted, dwelling with suffering. A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual takes him to hell.

"Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment? There is the case where a certain individual is developed in [contemplating] the body, developed in virtue, developed in mind, developed in discernment: unrestricted, large-hearted, dwelling with the unlimited. A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

"Suppose that a man were to drop a salt crystal into a small amount of water in a cup. What do you think? Would the water in the cup become salty because of the salt crystal, and unfit to drink?"

"Yes, lord...."

"Now suppose that a man were to drop a salt crystal into the River Ganges. What do you think? Would the water in the River Ganges become salty because of the salt crystal, and unfit to drink?"

"No, lord...."

"In the same way, there is the case where a trifling evil deed done by one individual [the first] takes him to hell; and there is the case where the very same sort of trifling deed done by the other individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment."

—*AN III.101*

§ 28. Then Asibandhakaputta the headman, a disciple of the Niganthas, went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him: "Headman, how does Nigantha Nataputta teach the Dhamma to his disciples?"

"Nigantha Nataputta teaches the Dhamma to his disciples in this way, lord: 'All those who take life are destined for the plane of deprivation, are destined for hell. All those who steal .... All those who indulge in illicit sex .... All those who tell lies are destined for the plane of deprivation, are destined for hell. Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by

that is one led [to a state of rebirth].' That's how Nigantha Nataputta teaches the Dhamma to his disciples."

"If it's true that 'Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led [to a state of rebirth],' then no one is destined for the plane of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Nigantha Nataputta's words. What do you think, headman: If a man is one who takes life, then taking into consideration time spent doing & not doing, whether by day or by night, which time is more: the time he spends taking life or the time he spends not taking life?"

"... the time he spends taking life is less, lord, and the time he spends not taking life is certainly more. If it's true that 'Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led [to a state of rebirth],' then no one is destined for the plane of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Nigantha Nataputta's words."

"What do you think, headman: If a man is one who steals ... indulges in illicit sex ... tells lies, then taking into consideration time spent doing & not doing, whether by day or by night, which time is more: the time he spends telling lies or the time he spends not telling lies?"

"... the time he spends telling lies is less, lord, and the time he spends not telling lies is certainly more. If it's true that 'Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led [to a state of rebirth],' then no one is destined for the plane of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Nigantha Nataputta's words."

"There's the case, headman, where a certain teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: 'All those who take life are destined for the plane of deprivation, are destined for hell. All those who steal .... All those who indulge in illicit sex .... All those who tell lies are destined for the plane of deprivation, are destined for hell.' A disciple has faith in that teacher, and the thought occurs to him, 'Our teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: "All those who take life are destined for the plane of deprivation, are destined for hell." There are living beings that I have killed. I, too, am destined for the plane of deprivation, am destined for

hell.' He fastens onto that view. If he doesn't abandon that doctrine, doesn't abandon that state of mind, doesn't relinquish that view, then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell.

"[The thought occurs to him,] 'Our teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: 'All those who steal .... All those who indulge in illicit sex .... All those who tell lies are destined for the plane of deprivation, are destined for hell.' There are lies that I have told. I, too, am destined for the plane of deprivation, am destined for hell.' He fastens onto that view. If he doesn't abandon that doctrine, doesn't abandon that state of mind, doesn't relinquish that view, then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell.

"There is the case, headman, where a Tathagata appears in the world, worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear knowing & conduct, well-gone, a knower of the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of those to be tamed, teacher of human & divine beings, awakened, blessed. He, in various ways, criticizes & censures the taking of life, and says, 'Abstain from taking life.' He criticizes & censures stealing, and says, 'Abstain from stealing.' He criticizes & censures indulging in illicit sex, and says, 'Abstain from indulging in illicit sex.' He criticizes & censures the telling of lies, and says, 'Abstain from the telling of lies.'

"A disciple has faith in that teacher and reflects: 'The Blessed One in a variety of ways criticizes & censures the taking of life, and says, "Abstain from taking life." There are living beings that I have killed, to a greater or lesser extent. That was not right. That was not good. But if I become remorseful for that reason, that evil deed of mine will not be undone.' So, reflecting thus, he abandons right then the taking of life, and in the future refrains from taking life. This is how there comes to be the abandoning of that evil deed. This is how there comes to be the transcending of that evil deed.

"[He reflects:] 'The Blessed One in a variety of ways criticizes & censures stealing ... indulging in illicit sex ... the telling of lies, and says, "Abstain from the telling of lies."

There are lies I have told, to a greater or lesser extent. That was not right. That was not good. But if I become remorseful for that reason, that evil deed of mine will not be undone.' So, reflecting thus, he abandons right then the telling of lies, and in the future refrains from telling lies. This is how there comes to be the abandoning of that evil deed. This is how there comes to be the transcending of that evil deed.

"Having abandoned the taking of life, he refrains from taking life ... he refrains from stealing ... he refrains from illicit sex ... he refrains from lies ... he refrains from divisive speech ... he refrains from abusive speech ... he refrains from idle chatter. Having abandoned covetousness, he becomes uncovetous. Having abandoned malevolence & anger, he becomes one with a mind of no malevolence. Having abandoned wrong views, he becomes one who has right views.

"That disciple of the noble ones, headman—thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of malevolence, unbewildered, alert, mindful—keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with good will, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without malevolence. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when the release of awareness through good will is thus developed, thus pursued, any deed done to a limited extent no longer remains there, no longer stays there.

"That disciple of the noble ones ... keeps pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with compassion ... appreciation ... equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without

hostility, without malevolence. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when the release of awareness through equanimity is thus developed, thus pursued, any deed done to a limited extent no longer remains there, no longer stays there."

—*SN XLII.8*

C. Diversity & Cessation

§ 29. "These four types of kamma have been understood, realized, & made known by me. Which four? There is kamma that is dark with dark result; kamma that is white with white result; kamma that is dark & white with dark & white result; and kamma that is neither dark nor white with neither dark nor white result, leading to the ending of kamma.

"And what is kamma that is dark with dark result? There is the case where a certain person fabricates an injurious bodily fabrication...an injurious verbal fabrication... an injurious mental fabrication....He rearises in an injurious world where he is touched by injurious contacts....He experiences feelings that are exclusively painful, like those of the beings in hell. This is called kamma that is dark with dark result.

"And what is kamma that is white with white result? There is the case where a certain person fabricates an uninjurious bodily fabrication... an uninjurious verbal fabrication... an uninjurious mental fabrication.... He rearises in an uninjurious world where he is touched by uninjurious contacts.... He experiences feelings that are exclusively pleasant, like those of the Ever-radiant Devas. This is called kamma that is white with white result.

"And what is kamma that is dark & white with dark & white result? There is the case where a certain person fabricates a bodily fabrication that is injurious & uninjurious...a verbal fabrication that is injurious & uninjurious...a mental fabrication that is injurious & uninjurious....He rearises in

an injurious & uninjurious world where he is touched by injurious & uninjurious contacts....He experiences injurious & uninjurious feelings, pleasure mingled with pain, like those of human beings, some devas, and some beings in the lower realms. This is called kamma that is dark & white with dark & white result.

"And what is kamma that is neither dark nor white with neither dark nor white result, leading to the ending of kamma? The intention right there to abandon this kamma that is dark with dark result ... this kamma that is white with white result ... this kamma that is dark & white with dark & white result. This is called kamma that is neither dark nor white with neither dark nor white result, leading to the ending of kamma."

—*AN IV.232*

[A related discourse repeats most of the above, defining dark kamma with dark result with the following example: "There is the case of a certain person who kills living beings, steals what is not given, engages in illicit sex, tells lies, and drinks fermented & distilled liquors that are the basis for heedlessness," and white kamma with white result with the following example: "There is the case of a certain person who abstains from killing living beings, abstains from stealing what is not given, abstains from engaging in illicit sex, abstains from telling lies, and abstains from drinking fermented & distilled liquors that are the basis for heedlessness."]

—*AN IV.234*

§ 30. "And what is kamma that is neither dark nor white with neither dark nor white result, leading to the ending of kamma? Right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration."

—*AN IV.237*

1. Dark Kamma, White Kamma

§ 31. "These five things are welcome, agreeable, pleasant, & hard to obtain in the world. Which five? Long life ... beauty ... pleasure ... status ... rebirth in heaven.... Now, I tell you, these five things are not to be obtained through prayers or wishes. If they were to be obtained through prayers or wishes, who here would lack them? It's not fitting for the disciple of the noble ones who desires long life to pray for it or to delight in doing so. Instead, the disciple of the noble ones who desires long life should follow the path of practice leading to long life. In so doing, he will attain long life, either human or divine. (Similarly with beauty, pleasure, status, & rebirth in heaven.)"

—*AN V 43*

§ 32. "There are these four qualities, TigerPaw, that lead to a lay person's happiness & well-being in this life. Which four? Being consummate in initiative, being consummate in vigilance, having admirable people as friends, and maintaining one's livelihood in tune.

"And what does it mean to be consummate in initiative? There is the case where a lay person, by whatever occupation he makes his living—whether by farming or trading or cattle tending or archery or as a king's man or by any other craft—is clever & untiring at it, endowed with discrimination in its techniques, enough to arrange & carry it out. This is called being consummate in initiative.

"And what does it mean to be consummate in vigilance? There is the case when a lay person has righteous wealth—righteously gained, coming from his initiative, his striving, his making an effort, gathered by the strength of his arm, earned by his sweat—he manages to protect it through vigilance [with the thought], 'How shall neither kings nor thieves make off with this property of mine, nor fire burn it,

nor water sweep it away, nor hateful heirs make off with it?' This is called being consummate in vigilance.

"And what does it mean to have admirable people as friends? There is the case where a lay person, in whatever town or village he may dwell, spends time with householders or householders' sons, young or old, who are advanced in virtue. He talks with them, engages them in discussions. He emulates consummate conviction in those who are consummate in conviction, consummate virtue in those who are consummate in virtue, consummate generosity in those who are consummate in generosity, & consummate discernment in those who are consummate in discernment. This is called having admirable people as friends.

"And what does it mean to maintain one's livelihood in tune? There is the case where a lay person, knowing the income & outflow of his wealth, maintains a livelihood in tune, neither a spendthrift nor a penny-pincher, [thinking], 'Thus will my income exceed my outflow, and my outflow will not exceed my income.' Just as when a weigher or his apprentice, when holding the scales, knows, 'It has tipped down so much or has tipped up so much,' in the same way, the lay person, knowing the income & outflow of his wealth, maintains a livelihood in tune.... If a lay person has a small income but maintains a grand livelihood, it will be rumored of him, 'This clansman devours his wealth like a fruit-tree eater [Commentary: one who shakes more fruit off a tree than he can possibly eat].' If a lay person has a large income but maintains a miserable livelihood, it will be rumored of him, 'This clansman will die of starvation.' But when a lay person, knowing the income & outflow of his wealth, maintains a livelihood in tune, neither a spendthrift nor a penny-pincher, [thinking], 'Thus will my income exceed my outflow, and my outflow will not exceed my income,' this is call maintaining one's livelihood in tune.

"These are the four drains on one's store of wealth: being debauched in sex; being debauched in drink; being debauched in gambling; and having evil people as friends, associates, & companions. Just as if there were a great

reservoir with four inlets & four drains, and a man were to close the inlets and open the drains, and the sky were not to pour down proper showers, the depletion of that great reservoir could be expected, not its increase. In the same way, these are the four drains on one's store of wealth: being debauched in sex, being debauched in drink, being debauched in gambling, and having evil people as friends, associates, & companions.

"These are the four inlets to one's store of wealth: not being debauched in sex; not being debauched in drink; not being debauched in gambling; and having admirable people as friends, associates, & companions. Just as if there were a great reservoir with four inlets & four drains, and a man were to open the inlets and close the drains, and the sky were to pour down proper showers, the increase of that great reservoir could be expected, not its depletion. In the same way, these are the four inlets to one's store of wealth: not being debauched in sex, not being debauched in drink, not being debauched in gambling, and having admirable people as friends, associates, & companions.

"These, TigerPaw, are the four qualities that lead to a lay person's happiness & well-being in this life.

—*AN VIII.54*

§ 33. I have heard that at one time the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's park. Then a certain deva, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta's Grove, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, she stood to one side. As she was standing there, she addressed him with a verse.

"Many devas & humans beings
give thought to protection,
desiring well-being.
Tell, then, the highest protection."

[The Buddha:]

"Not consorting with fools,
consorting with the wise,
paying homage to those worthy of homage:
This is the highest protection.

Living in a civilized land,
having made merit in the past,
directing oneself rightly:
This is the highest protection.

Broad knowledge, skill,
well-mastered discipline,
well-spoken words :
This is the highest protection.

Support for one's parents,
assistance to one's wife & children,
consistency in one's work:
This is the highest protection.

Generosity, living in rectitude,
assistance to one's relatives,
deeds that are blameless:
This is the highest protection.

Avoiding, abstaining from evil;
refraining from intoxicants,
being heedful of the qualities of the mind:
This is the highest protection.

Respect, humility,
contentment, gratitude,
hearing the Dhamma on timely occasions:
This is the highest protection.

Patience, composure,
seeing contemplatives,
discussing the Dhamma on timely occasions:
This is the highest protection.

Austerity, celibacy,
seeing the Noble Truths,

realizing Unbinding:
This is the highest protection.

A mind that, when touched
by the ways of the world,
is unshaken, sorrowless, dustless, secure:
This is the highest protection.

Everywhere undefeated
when acting in this way,
people go everywhere in well-being:

This is their highest protection."

—*Sn II.4*

§ 34. Asibandhakaputta the headman said to the Blessed One: "The brahmans of the Western lands, lord—those who carry water pots, wear garlands of water plants, purify with water, & worship fire—can take [the spirit of] a dead person, lift it out, instruct it, & send it to heaven. But the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, can arrange it so that all the world, at the break-up of the body, after death, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world."

"Very well, then, headman, I will question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit...

"Suppose a man were to throw a large boulder into a deep lake of water, and a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart [saying,] 'Rise up, O boulder! Come floating up, O boulder! Come float to the shore, O boulder!' What do you think: would that boulder—because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people—rise up, come floating up, or come float to the shore?"

"No, lord."

"So it is with any man who takes life, steals, indulges in illicit sex; is a liar, one who speaks divisive speech, abusive speech, & idle chatter; is covetous, malevolent, & holds to wrong views. Even though a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate

with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart—[saying,] 'May this man, at the break-up of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, the heavenly world!'—still, at the break-up of the body, after death, he would reappear in destitution, a bad destination, the lower realms, hell....

"Now, suppose a man were to throw a jar of ghee or a jar of oil into a deep lake of water, where it would break. There the shards & jar-fragments would go down, while the ghee or oil would come up. Then a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart [saying,] 'Sink, O ghee/oil! Submerge, O ghee/oil! Go down, O ghee/oil!' What do you think: would that ghee/oil, because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people sink, submerge, or go down?"

"No, lord."

"So it is with any man who refrains from taking life, from stealing, & from indulging in illicit sex; he refrains from lying, from speaking divisive speech, from abusive speech, & from idle chatter; he is not covetous, not malevolent, & holds to right view. Even though a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart—[saying,] 'May this man, at the break-up of the body, after death, reappear in a destitution, a bad destination, the lower realms, hell!'—still, at the break-up of the body, after death, he would reappear in a good destination, the heavenly world."

—*SN XLII.6*

§ 35. "There are these four qualities that lead to a lay person's happiness & well-being in lives to come. Which four? Being consummate in conviction, being consummate in virtue, being consummate in generosity, being consummate in discernment.

"And what does it mean to be consummate in conviction? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones has conviction, is convinced of the Tathagata's Awakening:

'Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the world, unexcelled as a trainer for those people fit to be tamed, the Teacher of divine & human beings, awakened, blessed.' This is called being consummate in conviction.

"And what does it mean to be consummate in virtue? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking life, abstains from stealing, abstains from illicit sexual conduct, abstains from lying, abstains from taking intoxicants that cause heedlessness. This is called being consummate in virtue.

"And what does it mean to be consummate in generosity? There is the case of a disciple of the noble ones, his awareness cleansed of the stain of miserliness, living at home, freely generous, openhanded, delighting in being magnanimous, responsive to requests, delighting in the distribution of alms. This is called being consummate in generosity.

"And what does it mean to be consummate in discernment? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones is discerning, endowed with discernment of arising & passing away—noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress. This is called being consummate in discernment.

"These, TigerPaw, are the four qualities that lead to a lay person's happiness & well-being in lives to come.

—*AN VIII.54*

§ 36. "There are these seven treasures. Which seven? The treasure of conviction, the treasure of virtue, the treasure of conscience, the treasure of concern, the treasure of listening, the treasure of generosity, the treasure of discernment.

"And what is the treasure of conviction? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones has conviction, is convinced of the Tathagata's Awakening: 'Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the world, unexcelled as a trainer for those people

fit to be tamed, the Teacher of divine & human beings, awakened, blessed' ....

"And what is the treasure of virtue? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking life, abstains from stealing, abstains from illicit sexual conduct, abstains from lying, abstains from taking intoxicants that cause heedlessness....

"And what is the treasure of conscience? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones feels shame at [the thought of engaging in] bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, mental misconduct....

"And what is the treasure of concern? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones feels concern for [the suffering that results from] bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, mental misconduct....

"And what is the treasure of listening? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones has heard much, has retained what he/she has heard, has stored what he/she has heard. Whatever teachings are admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end, that—in their meaning & expression—proclaim the holy life that is entirely complete pure: those he/she has listened to often, retained, discussed, accumulated, examined with his/her mind, and well-penetrated in terms of his/her views....

"And what is the treasure of generosity? There is the case of a disciple of the noble ones, his awareness cleansed of the stain of stinginess, living at home, freely generous, openhanded, delighting in being magnanimous, responsive to requests, delighting in the distribution of alms....

"And what is the treasure of discernment? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones is discerning, endowed with discernment of arising & passing away—noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress....

"These, monks, are the seven treasures.

> "The treasure of conviction,
> the treasure of virtue,
> the treasure of conscience & concern,
> the treasure of listening, generosity,

& discernment as the seventh treasure:
Whoever, man or woman, has these treasures
is said not to be poor, has not lived in vain.
So conviction & virtue, faith & Dhamma-vision
should be cultivated by the wise,
remembering the Buddhas' instruction."

—*AN VII.6*

§ 37. "Monks, don't be afraid of acts of merit. This is another way of saying what is blissful, desirable, pleasing, endearing, charming—i.e., acts of merit. I am cognizant that, having long performed meritorious deeds, I long experienced desirable, pleasing, endearing, charming results. Having developed a mind of good will for seven years, then for seven aeons of contraction & expansion I didn't return to this world. Whenever the aeon was contracting, I went to the realm of Streaming Radiance. Whenever the aeon was expanding, I reappeared in an empty Brahma-abode. There I was the Great Brahman, the Unconquered Conqueror, All-seeing, & Wielder of Power. Then for thirty-six times I was Sakka, ruler of the gods. For many hundreds of times I was a king, a wheel-turning emperor, a righteous king of Dhamma, conqueror of the four corners of the earth, maintaining stable control over the countryside, endowed with the seven treasures*—to say nothing of the times I was a local king. The thought occurred to me: 'Of what action of mine is this the fruit, of what action the result, that I now have such great power & might?' Then the thought occurred to me: 'This is the fruit of my three [types of] action, the result of three types of action, that I now have such great power & might: i.e., generosity, self-control, & restraint.'"

Train in acts of merit
that bring long-lasting bliss—
develop generosity,
a life in tune,
a mind of good-will.

Developing these
three things
that bring about bliss,
the wise reappear
in a world of bliss
unalloyed.

*NOTE: The seven treasures are a divine wheel, an ideal jewel, an ideal elephant, an ideal horse, an ideal wife, an ideal treasurer, an ideal counselor.

—*Iti* 22

§ 38. As he was sitting to one side, King Pasenadi Kosala said to the Blessed One: "Just now, lord, while I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in my awareness: 'Who are dear to themselves, and who are not dear to themselves?' Then it occurred to me: 'Those who engage in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct are not dear to themselves. Even though they may say, "We are dear to ourselves," still they aren't dear to themselves. Why is that? Of their own accord, they act toward themselves as an enemy would act toward an enemy; thus they aren't dear to themselves. But those who engage in good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct are dear to themselves. Even though they may say, "We aren't dear to ourselves," still they are dear to themselves. Why is that? Of their own accord, they act toward themselves as a dear one would act toward a dear one; thus they are dear to themselves.'"

"That's the way it is, great king! That's the way it is! Those who engage in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct are not dear to themselves. Even though they may say, 'We are dear to ourselves,' still they aren't dear to themselves. Why is that? Of their own accord, they act toward themselves as an enemy would act toward an enemy; thus they aren't dear to themselves. But those who engage in good bodily conduct, good verbal

conduct, & good mental conduct are dear to themselves. Even though they may say, 'We aren't dear to ourselves,' still they are dear to themselves. Why is that? Of their own accord, they act toward themselves as a dear one would act toward a dear one; thus they are dear to themselves."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"If you hold yourself dear
then don't fetter yourself
with evil,
for happiness isn't easily gained
by one who commits
a wrong-doing.

When seized by the End-maker [Death]
as you abandon the human state,
what's truly your own?
What do you take along when you go?
What follows behind you
like a shadow
that never leaves?

Both the merit & evil
that you as a mortal
perform here:
that's what's truly your own,
what you take along when you go;
that's what follows behind you
like a shadow
that never leaves.

So do what is admirable,
as an accumulation
for the future life.
Deeds of merit are the support for beings
when they arise
in the other world."

—*SN III.4*

§ 39. When a house is on fire,
the vessel salvaged
is the one that will be of use,
not the one left there to burn.

So when the world is on fire
with aging & death,
you should salvage [your wealth] by giving:
what's given is well salvaged.

What's given bears fruit as pleasure.
What isn't given does not:
thieves take it away, or kings;
it gets burnt by fire or lost.

Then in the end
you leave the body
along with your possessions.
Knowing this, the intelligent man
enjoys possessions & gives.
Having enjoyed & given
in line with his means,
uncensured he goes
to the heavenly state.

—*SN I.41*

§ 40. "Monks, there are these eight rewards of merit, rewards of skillfulness, nourishments of happiness, celestial, resulting in happiness, leading to heaven, leading to what is desirable, pleasurable, & appealing, to benefit & happiness. Which eight?

"There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones has gone to the Buddha for refuge. This is the first reward of merit ....

"Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones has gone to the Dhamma for refuge. This is the second reward of merit ....

"Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones has gone to the Sangha for refuge. This is the third reward of merit ....

"Now, there are these five gifts, five great gifts—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—that are not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and are unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & priests. Which five?

"There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, abandoning the taking of life, abstains from taking life. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the first gift, the first great gift—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & priests. And this is the fourth reward of merit ....

"Furthermore, abandoning taking what is not given (stealing), the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking what is not given ... from illicit sex ... from lying ...

"Furthermore, abandoning the use of intoxicants, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking intoxicants. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the fifth gift, the fifth great gift—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & priests. And this is the eighth

reward of merit, reward of skillfulness, nourishment of happiness, celestial, resulting in happiness, leading to heaven, leading to what is desirable, pleasurable, & appealing; to benefit & to happiness.

—AN VIII.39

§ 41. "Beings are the owners of their kamma, heir to their kamma, born of their kamma, related through their kamma, and have their kamma as their arbitrator. Kamma is what creates distinctions among beings in terms of coarseness & refinement....

"There is the case where a certain woman or man is one who takes life—brutal, bloody-handed, violent, cruel, merciless to living beings. From adopting & carrying out such kamma, then on the break-up of the body, after death, this person re-appears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. Or, if he/she does not reappear in the plane of deprivation...in hell, but instead returns to the human state, then he/she is short-lived wherever reborn. This is the way leading to short life, namely being one who takes life....

"But there is the case where a certain woman or man, abandoning the taking of life, abstains from the taking of life, dwelling with rod laid down, knife laid down, scrupulous, merciful, sympathetic for the benefit of all living beings. From adopting & carrying out such kamma, then on the break-up of the body, after death, this person re-appears in the good destinations, in the heavenly world. Or, if he/she does not reappear...in the heavenly world, but instead returns to the human state, then he/she long-lived wherever reborn. This is the way leading to long life, namely being one who, abandoning the taking of life, abstains from taking life....

"Furthermore, there is the case where a certain woman or man has a tendency to injure living beings with the hand, with a clod, with a stick, or with a knife....On the break-up of the body, after death, this person re-appears in the plane of deprivation....in hell. Or, if he/she...instead

returns to the human state, then he/she is sickly wherever reborn. This is the way leading to being sickly....

"But there is the case where a certain woman or man does not have a tendency to injure living beings....This is the way leading to being healthy....

"Furthermore, there is the case where a certain woman or man has an angry & irritable nature. Even when lightly criticized, he/she gets offended, provoked, hostile, & resentful, and displays annoyance, aversion, & bitterness....This is the way leading to being ugly....

"But there is the case where a certain woman or man does not have an angry & irritable nature. Even when heavily criticized, he/she does not get offended, provoked, hostile, or resentful, and displays no annoyance, aversion, or bitterness....This is the way leading to being beautiful....

"Furthermore, there is the case where a certain woman or man has an envious nature—envying, resenting, & begrudging the fortune, honor, respect, reverence, salutations, & veneration received by others....This is the way leading to having little authority....

"But there is the case where a certain woman or man does not have an envious nature—neither envying, resenting, nor begrudging the fortune, honor, respect, reverence, salutations, & veneration received by others....This is the way leading to having great authority....

"Furthermore, there is the case where a certain woman or man does not give food, drink, clothing, vehicles, garlands, scents, ointments, beds, dwellings, or lamps to priests or contemplatives....This is the way leading to being poor....

"But there is the case where a certain woman or man gives food, drink, clothing, vehicles, garlands, scents, ointments, beds, dwellings, & lamps to priests & contemplatives....This is the way leading to being wealthy....

"Furthermore, there is the case where a certain woman or man is obstinate & arrogant, not paying homage to those who deserve homage, not rising up for those in whose presence one should rise up, not offering a seat to those who deserve a seat, not making way for those for whom one

should make way, not honoring, respecting, revering, or venerating those who should be honored...venerated. This is the way leading to being reborn in a low birth....

"But there is the case where a certain woman or man is not obstinate or arrogant, who pays homage to those who deserve homage, rises up for those in whose presence one should rise up, offers a seat to those who deserve a seat, makes way for those for whom one should make way, honors, respects, reveres, & venerates those who should be honored...venerated. This is the way leading to being reborn in a high birth....

"Furthermore, there is the case where a certain woman or man, having approached a priest or contemplative, does not ask, 'What, venerable sir, is skillful? What is unskillful? What is blameworthy? What is blameless? What is to be cultivated? What is not to be cultivated? What kind of action will lead to my long-term harm & suffering? What kind of action will lead to my long-term benefit & happiness?'.... This is the way leading to having weak discernment....

"But there is the case where a certain woman or man, having approached a priest or contemplative, asks, 'What, venerable sir, is skillful? What is unskillful? What is blameworthy? What is blameless? What is to be cultivated? What is not to be cultivated? What, having been done by me, will lead to my long-term harm & suffering? What, having been done by me, will lead to my long-term benefit & happiness?' ....This is the way leading to having great discernment....

"Beings are the owners of their kamma, heir to their kamma, born of their kamma, related through their kamma, and have their kamma as their arbitrator. Kamma is what creates distinctions among beings in terms of coarseness & refinement."

—*MN 135*

§ 42. "The taking of life—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, to rebirth as a common animal, to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from the taking of life

is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to a short life span.

" .... The slightest of all the results coming from stealing is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to the loss of one's wealth.

" ... The slightest of all the results coming from illicit sexual behavior is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to rivalry & revenge.

" ...The slightest of all the results coming from telling lies is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to being falsely accused.

" ...The slightest of all the results coming from divisive tale-bearing is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to the breaking of one's friendships.

" ... The slightest of all the results coming from abusive speech is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to unappealing sounds.

" ...The slightest of all the results coming from idle chatter is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to words that aren't worth taking to heart.

"The drinking of fermented & distilled liquors—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, to rebirth as a common animal, to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from drinking fermented & distilled liquors is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to mental derangement."

—AN VIII.40

§ 43. "There are these five inhabitants of the states of deprivation, inhabitants of hell, who are in agony & incurable. Which five? One who has killed his/her mother, one who has killed his/her father, one who has killed an arahant, one who—with a corrupted mind—has caused the blood of a Tathagata to flow, and one who has caused a split in the Sangha."

—AN V.129

§ 44. As he was sitting to one side, King Pasenadi Kosala said to the Blessed One: "Just now, lord, while I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in my awareness: 'Few are those people in the world who, when acquiring lavish wealth, don't become intoxicated & heedless, don't become greedy for sensual pleasures, and don't mistreat other beings. Many more are those who, when acquiring lavish wealth, become intoxicated & heedless, become greedy for sensual pleasures, and mistreat other beings.'"
"That's the way it is, great king! That's the way it is! Few are those people in the world who, when acquiring lavish wealth, don't become intoxicated & heedless, don't become greedy for sensual pleasures, and don't mistreat other beings. Many more are those who, when acquiring lavish wealth, become intoxicated & heedless, become greedy for sensual pleasures, and mistreat other beings."
That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Impassioned with sensual possessions,
greedy, dazed by sensual pleasures,
they don't awaken to the fact
that they've gone too far—
like deer into trap laid out.
Afterwards it's bitter for them:
evil for them
the result."

—*SN III.6*

§ 45. As he was sitting to one side, King Pasenadi Kosala said to the Blessed One: "Just now, lord, as I was sitting in judgment, I saw that even affluent nobles, affluent brahmans, & affluent householders—rich, with great wealth & property, with vast amounts of gold & silver, vast amounts of valuables & commodities, vast amounts of wealth & grain—tell deliberate lies with sensual pleasures as the cause, sensual pleasures as the reason, simply for the sake of sensual pleasures. Then, the thought occurred to

me: 'I've had enough of this judging! Let some other fine fellow be known for his judgments!'"

"That's the way it is, great king! That's the way it is! Even affluent nobles, affluent brahmans, & affluent householders ... tell deliberate lies ... simply for the sake of sensual pleasures. That will lead to their long-term harm & suffering."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Impassioned with sensual possessions,
greedy, dazed by sensual pleasures,
they don't awaken to the fact
that they've gone too far—
like fish into trap set out.
Afterwards it's bitter for them:
evil for them
the result."

—*SN III.7*

§ 46. As he was sitting to one side, King Pasenadi Kosala said to the Blessed One: "Is there, lord, any one quality that keeps both kinds of benefits secure—those in the present life & those in the future life?"

"There is one quality, great king, that keeps both kinds of benefits secure—those pertaining to the present life & those to the future life."

"But what, venerable sir, is that one quality ... ?"

"Heedfulness, great king. Just as the footprints of all living beings with legs can be encompassed by the footprint of the elephant, and the elephant's footprint is declared to be supreme among them in terms of its great size; in the same way, heedfulness is the one quality that keeps both kinds of benefits secure—those in the present life & those in the future life."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"For one who desires
long life, health,
beauty, heaven, & noble birth,
—lavish delights, one after another—
the wise praise heedfulness
in performing of deeds of merit.

The wise person, heedful,
achieves both benefits:
those in the here-&-now
and those in the life to come.
By breaking through to his benefit,
he's called *enlightened,*
wise."

—*SN III.17*

2. Kamma Neither Dark nor White

§ 47. [Uttara the deva's son:]

"Life is swept along,
next-to-nothing its span.
For one swept on by aging
no shelters exist.
Perceiving this danger in death,
one should do deeds of merit
that bring about bliss."

[The Buddha:]

"Life is swept along,
next-to-nothing its span.
For one swept on by aging
no shelters exist.
Perceiving this danger in death,
one should drop the world's bait
and look for peace."

—*SN II.19*

§ 48. "And what is the cessation of kamma? Whoever touches the release that comes from the cessation of bodily kamma, verbal kamma, & mental kamma. That is called the cessation of kamma.

"And what is the path of practice leading to the cessation of kamma? Just this noble eightfold path....This is called the path of practice leading to the cessation of kamma."

—*SN XXXV.145*

§ 49. "Now what, monks, is the Noble Eightfold Path? Right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

"And what is right view? Knowledge in terms of stress, knowledge in terms of the origination of stress, knowledge in terms of the cessation of stress, knowledge in terms of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress....

"And what is right resolve? Being resolved on renunciation, on freedom from malevolence, on harmlessness....

"And what is right speech? Abstaining from lying, abstaining from divisive speech, abstaining from abusive speech, abstaining from idle chatter....

"And what is right action? Abstaining from taking life, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from sexual intercourse....

"And what is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood....

"And what is right effort? (1) There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen. (2) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the abandonment of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen. (3) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen. (4) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the

maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen....

"And what is right mindfulness? (1) There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, aware, & mindful—putting away greed & distress with reference to the world. (2) He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves—ardent, aware, & mindful—putting away greed & distress with reference to the world. (3) He remains focused on the mind in & of itself—ardent, aware, & mindful—putting away greed & distress with reference to the world. (4) He remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, aware, & mindful—putting away greed & distress with reference to the world....

"And what is right concentration? (1) There is the case where a monk—quite withdrawn from sensual pleasures, withdrawn from unskillful (mental) qualities—enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. (2) With the stilling of directed thought & evaluation, he enters & remains in the second jhana: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. (3) With the fading of rapture, he remains in equanimity, mindful & fully aware, and physically sensitive of pleasure. He enters & remains in the third jhana, of which the Noble Ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasurable abiding.' (4) With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This, monks, is called right concentration."

—DN 22

§ 50. "There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for people of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—does not discern what ideas are

fit for attention or what ideas are unfit for attention. This being so, he does not attend to ideas fit for attention and attends [instead] to ideas unfit for attention....

"This is how he attends inappropriately: 'Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past? Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?' Or else he is inwardly perplexed about the immediate present: 'Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?'

"As he attends inappropriately in this way, one of six kinds of view arises in him: The view *I have a self* arises in him as true & established, or the view *I have no self* ... or the view *It is precisely by means of self that I perceive self* ... or the view *It is precisely by means of self that I perceive not-self* ... or the view *It is precisely by means of not-self that I perceive self* arises in him as true & established, or else he has a view like this: *This very self of mine—the knower that is sensitive here & there to the ripening of good & bad actions—is the self of mine that is constant, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, and will endure as long as eternity.* This is called a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views. Bound by a fetter of views, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is not freed from birth, aging, & death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. He is not freed, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

"The well-instructed disciple of the noble ones—who has regard for noble ones, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma; who has regard for men of integrity, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma—discerns what ideas are fit for attention and what ideas are unfit for attention. This being so, he does not attend to ideas unfit for attention and attends [instead] to ideas fit for attention....

"He attends appropriately, *This is stress ... This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress ... This is the way*

leading to the cessation of stress. As he attends appropriately in this way, three fetters are abandoned in him: identity-view, doubt, and grasping at precepts & practices. These are called the fermentations to be abandoned by seeing."

—*MN 2*

§ 51. Now at that time this train of thought arose in the awareness of a certain monk: "It seems, then, that form is not-self, feeling is not-self, perception is not-self, fabrications are not-self, consciousness is not-self. So the actions done by what is not-self will touch what self? [What self will be touched by the actions done by what is not-self?]"

Then the Blessed One, having encompassed with his awareness the awareness of that monk, addressed the monks: "It's possible that a foolish man—his awareness immersed in ignorance & governed by craving—might think that the Teacher's message can be slipped past in this way: 'It seems, then, that form is not-self, feeling ... perception ... fabrications ... consciousness is not-self. So what self will be touched by the actions done by what is not-self?' Haven't I counter-questioned & trained you with regard to each of these phenomena? What do you think, monks: is form constant or inconstant?" "Inconstant, lord." "And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?" "Stressful, lord." "And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?" "No, lord."

"... Is feeling constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord." ....

"... Is perception constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord." ....

"... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord." ....

"What do you think, monks—Is consciousness constant or inconstant?" "Inconstant, lord." "And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?" "Stressful, lord." "And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?" "No, lord."

"Thus, monks, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every form is to be seen as it actually is with right discernment as: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"Any feeling .... Any perception .... Any fabrications ....

"Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every consciousness is to be seen as it actually is with right discernment as: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is fully released. With full release, there is the knowledge, 'Fully released.' He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'"

—*SN XXII.82*

§ 52. A certain brahman: "Now then, Master Gotama: Is the one who acts the same one who experiences [the results of the act]?"

The Buddha: "[To say,] 'The one who acts is the same one who experiences,' is one extreme."

The brahman: "Then, Master Gotama, is the one who acts someone other than the one who experiences?"

The Buddha: "[To say,] 'The one who acts is someone other than the one who experiences,' is the second extreme. Avoiding both of these extremes, the Tathagata teaches the Dhamma by means of the middle:

"From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

"From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

"From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.

"From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.

"From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

"From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.

"From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.

"From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.

"From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.

"From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

"From birth as a requisite condition, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

"Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form ... the cessation of the six sense media ... the cessation of contact ... the cessation of feeling ... the cessation of craving ... cessation of clinging/sustenance ... the cessation of becoming ... the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering."

—*SN XII.46*

§ 53. The Buddha: "From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.... From birth as a requisite condition, then old age & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering."

When this was said, a certain monk said to the Blessed One: "Which aging & death, lord? And to whom does this aging & death belong?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said. If a monk were to ask, 'Which aging & death? And to whom does this aging & death belong?' and if a monk were to ask, 'Is aging

& death one thing, and does it belong to someone/something else?' both of them would have the same meaning, even though their words would differ. When a monk is of the view that the soul is the same as the body, there is no leading the holy life. And when a monk is of the view that the soul is one thing and the body another, there is no leading the holy life. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathagata points out the Dhamma in between them: From birth as a requisite condition comes aging & death."

"Which birth, lord? And to whom does this birth belong?"

"Not a valid question," the Blessed One said.

(Similarly with all the requisite conditions down to fabrications.)

"....Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathagata points out the Dhamma in between them: From ignorance as requisite condition come fabrications. Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance, every one of these writhings & wrigglings & wigglings—'Which aging & death? And to whom does this aging & death belong?' or 'Is aging & death one thing, and does it belong to someone/something else?' or 'The soul is the same as the body,' or 'The soul is one thing and the body another'—are abandoned, their root destroyed, like an uprooted palm tree, deprived of the conditions of existence, not destined for future arising."

(Similarly with all the requisite conditions down to fabrications.)

—*SN XII.35*

§ 54. "There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person...assumes form (the body) to be the self. That assumption is a fabrication. Now what is the cause, what is the origination, what is the birth, what is the coming-into-existence of that fabrication? To an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person, touched by that which is felt born of contact with ignorance, craving arises. That fabrication is born of that. And that fabrication is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. That craving ...

That feeling ... That contact ... That ignorance is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. It is by knowing & seeing in this way that one without delay puts an end to the (mental) fermentations.

"Or he doesn't assume form to be the self, but he assumes the self as possessing form ... form as in the self ... self as in form.

"Now that assumption is a fabrication. What is the cause...of that fabrication? To an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person, touched by the feeling born of contact with ignorance, craving arises. That fabrication is born of that. And that fabrication is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. That craving ...That feeling ...That contact ...That ignorance is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. It is by knowing & seeing in this way that one without delay puts an end to the (mental) fermentations.

(Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness.)

"Or ... he may have a view such as this: "This self is the same as the cosmos. This I will be after death, constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change." This eternalist view is a fabrication.... Or ... he may have a view such as this: "I would not be, neither would there be what is mine. I will not be, neither will there be what is mine." This annihilationist view is a fabrication.... Or ... he may be doubtful & uncertain, having come to no conclusion with regard to the true Dhamma. That doubt, uncertainty, & coming-to-no-conclusion is a fabrication.

"What is the cause ... of that fabrication? To an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person, touched by what is felt born of contact with ignorance, craving arises. That fabrication is born of that. And that fabrication is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. That craving ... That feeling ... That contact ... That ignorance is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. It is by knowing & seeing in this way that one without delay puts an end to the (mental) fermentations."

—SN XXII.81

§ 55. "If a person immersed in ignorance fabricates a meritorious fabrication, his consciousness goes on to merit. If he fabricates a demeritorious fabrication, his consciousness goes on to demerit. If he fabricates an imperturbable fabrication, his consciousness goes on to the imperturbable. When ignorance is abandoned by a monk, clear knowing arises. From the fading of ignorance and the arising of knowledge, he neither fabricates a meritorious fabrication nor a demeritorious fabrication nor an imperturbable fabrication. Neither fabricating nor willing, he is not sustained by anything in the world. Unsustained, he is not agitated. Unagitated, he is totally unbound right within. He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'"

—SN XII.51

§ 56. "Now when a monk discerns—as they actually are—the origin & passing away of the six spheres of (sensory) contact, their allure, their drawbacks, & the emancipation from them, then he discerns what is superior to all these things."

—DN 1

§ 57. Then Anathapindika the householder went to where the wanderers of other persuasions were staying. On arrival he greeted them courteously. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat down to one side. As he was sitting there, the wanderers said to him, "Tell us, householder, what views the contemplative Gotama has.'

"Venerable sirs, I don't know entirely what views the Blessed One has."

"Well, well. So you don't know entirely what views the contemplative Gotama has. Then tell us what views the monks have."

"I don't even know entirely what views the monks have."

"So you don't know entirely what views the contemplative Gotama has or even that the monks have. Then tell us what views you have."

"It wouldn't be difficult for me to expound to you what views I have. But please let the venerable ones expound each in line with his position, and then it won't be difficult for me to expound to you what views I have."

When this had been said, one of the wanderers said to Anathapindika the householder, *"The cosmos is eternal.* Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have."

Another wanderer said to Anathapindika, *"The cosmos is not eternal.* Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have."

Another wanderer said, *"The cosmos is finite...'..."The cosmos is infinite..." ..."The soul & the body are the same..."..."The soul is one thing and the body another..."..."After death a Tathagata exists..."..."After death a Tathagata does not exist..."..."After death a Tathagata both does & does not exist..."..."After death a Tathagata neither does nor does not exist.* Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have."

When this had been said, Anathapindika the householder said to the wanderers, "As for the venerable one who says, *'The cosmos is eternal.* Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have,' his view arises from his own inappropriate attention or in dependence on the words of another. Now this view has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen. Whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen, that is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. This venerable one thus adheres to that very stress, submits himself to that very stress." (Similarly for the other positions.)

When this had been said, the wanderers said to Anathapindika the householder, "We have each & every one expounded to you in line with our own positions. Now tell us what views you have."

"Whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen, that is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. Whatever is stress is not mine, is not what I am, is not my self. This is the sort of view I have."

"So, householder, whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen, that is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. You thus adhere to that very stress, submit yourself to that very stress."

"Venerable sirs, whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen, that is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. Whatever is stress is not mine, is not what I am, is not my self. Having seen this well with right discernment as it actually is present, I also discern the higher escape from it as it actually is present."

When this had been said, the wanderers fell silent, abashed, sitting with their shoulders drooping, their heads down, brooding, at a loss for words. Anathapindika the householder, perceiving that the wanderers were silent, abashed...at a loss for words, got up & left.

—*AN X.93*

§ 58. "This, monks, the Tathagata discerns. And he discerns that these standpoints, thus seized, thus held to, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond. And he discerns what surpasses this. And yet discerning that, he does not hold to that act of discernment. And as he is not holding to it, Unbinding *(nibbuti)* is experienced right within. Knowing, for what they are, the origin, ending, allure, & drawbacks of feelings, along with the emancipation from feelings, the Tathagata, monks—through lack of sustenance/clinging—is released."

—*DN 1*

KARMA

Karma is one of those words we don't translate. Its basic meaning is simple enough—*action*—but because of the weight the Buddha's teachings give to the role of action, the Sanskrit word *karma* packs in so many implications that the English word *action* can't carry all its luggage. This is why we've simply airlifted the original word into our vocabulary.

But when we try unpacking the connotations the word carries now that it has arrived in everyday usage, we find that most of its luggage has gotten mixed up in transit. In the eyes of most Americans, karma functions like fate—bad fate, at that: an inexplicable, unchangeable force coming out of our past, for which we are somehow vaguely responsible and powerless to fight. "I guess it's just my karma," I've heard people sigh when bad fortune strikes with such force that they see no alternative to resigned acceptance. The fatalism implicit in this statement is one reason why so many of us are repelled by the concept of karma, for it sounds like the kind of callous myth-making that can justify almost any kind of suffering or injustice in the status quo: "If he's poor, it's because of his karma." "If she's been raped, it's because of her karma." From this it seems a short step to saying that he or she *deserves* to suffer, and so doesn't deserve our help.

This misperception comes from the fact that the Buddhist concept of karma came to the West at the same time as non-Buddhist concepts, and so ended up with some of their luggage. Although many Asian concepts of karma are fatalistic, the early Buddhist concept was not fatalistic at all. In fact, if we look closely at early Buddhist ideas of karma, we'll find that they give even less importance to myths about the past than most modern people do.

For the early Buddhists, karma was non-linear. Other Indian schools believed that karma operated in a straight line, with actions from the past influencing the present, and present actions influencing the future. As a result, they saw little room for free will. Buddhists, however, saw that karma acts in feedback loops, with the present moment being shaped both by past and by present actions; present actions shape not only the future but also the present. This constant opening for present input into the causal process makes free will possible. This freedom is symbolized in the imagery the Buddhists used to explain the process: flowing water. Sometimes the flow from the past is so strong that little can be done except to stand fast, but there are also times when the flow is gentle enough to be diverted in almost any direction.

So, instead of promoting resigned powerlessness, the early Buddhist notion of karma focused on the liberating potential of what the mind is doing at every moment. Who you are—what you come from—is not anywhere near as important as the mind's motives for what it is doing right now. Even though the past may account for many of the inequalities we see in life, our measure as human beings is not the hand we've been dealt, for that hand can change at any moment. We take our own measure by how well we play the hand we've got. If you're suffering, you try not to continue the unskillful mental habits that would keep that particular karmic feedback going. If you see that other people are suffering, and you're in a position to help, you focus not on their karmic past but your karmic opportunity in the present: Someday you may find yourself in the same predicament they're in now, so here's your opportunity to act in the way you'd like them to act toward you when that day comes.

This belief that one's dignity is measured, not by one's past, but by one's present actions, flew right in the face of the Indian traditions of caste-based hierarchies, and explains why early Buddhists had such a field day poking fun at the pretensions and mythology of the brahmans. As the Buddha pointed out, a brahman could be a superior

person not because he came out of a brahman womb, but only if he acted with truly skillful intentions.

We read the early Buddhist attacks on the caste system, and aside from their anti-racist implications, they often strike us as quaint. What we fail to realize is that they strike right at the heart of our myths about our own past: our obsession with defining who we are in terms of where we come from—our race, ethnic heritage, gender, socio-economic background, sexual preference—our modern tribes. We put inordinate amounts of energy into creating and maintaining the mythology of our tribe so that we can take vicarious pride in our tribe's good name. Even when we become Buddhists, the tribe comes first. We demand a Buddhism that honors our myths.

From the standpoint of karma, though, where we come from is old karma, over which we have no control. What we "are" is a nebulous concept at best—and pernicious at worst, when we use it to find excuses for acting on unskillful motives. The worth of a tribe lies only in the skillful actions of its individual members. Even when those good people belong to our tribe, their good karma is theirs, not ours. And, of course, every tribe has its bad members, which means that the mythology of the tribe is a fragile thing. To hang onto anything fragile requires a large investment of passion, aversion, and delusion, leading inevitably to more unskillful actions on into the future.

So the Buddhist teachings on karma, far from being a quaint relic from the past, are a direct challenge to a basic thrust—and basic flaw—in modern culture. Only when we abandon our obsession with finding vicarious pride in our tribal past, and can take actual pride in the motives that underlie our present actions, can we say that the word *karma,* in its Buddhist sense, has recovered its luggage. And when we open the luggage, we'll find that it's brought us a gift: the gift we give ourselves and one another when we drop our myths about who we are, and can instead be honest about what we're doing with each moment—at the same time making the effort to do it right.

SAMSARA DIVIDED BY ZERO

The goal of Buddhist practice, nibbana, is said to be totally uncaused, and right there is a paradox. If the goal is uncaused, how can a path of practice—which is causal by nature—bring it about? This is an ancient question. The *Milinda-pañha,* a set of dialogues composed near the start of the common era, reports an exchange where King Milinda challenges a monk, Nagasena, with precisely this question. Nagasena replies with an analogy. The path of practice doesn't cause nibbana, he says. It simply takes you there, just as a road to a mountain doesn't cause the mountain to come into being, but simply leads you to where it is.

Nagasena's reply, though apt, didn't really settle the issue within the Buddhist tradition. Over the years many schools of meditation have taught that mental fabrications simply get in the way of a goal that's uncaused and unfabricated. Only by doing nothing at all and thus not fabricating anything in the mind, they say, will the unfabricated shine forth.

This view is based on a very simplistic understanding of fabricated reality, seeing causality as linear and totally predictable: X causes Y which causes Z and so on, with no effects turning around to condition their causes, and no possible way of using causality to escape from the causal network. However, one of the many things the Buddha discovered in the course of his awakening was that causality is not linear. The experience of the present is shaped both by actions in the present and by actions in the past. Actions in the present shape both the present and the future. The results of past and present actions continually interact. Thus there is always room for new input into the system, which gives scope for free will. There is also room for the many feedback loops that make experience so thoroughly

complex, and that are so intriguingly described in chaos theory. Reality doesn't resemble a simple line or circle. It's more like the bizarre trajectories of a strange attractor or a Mandelbrot set.

Because there are many similarities between chaos theory and Buddhist explanations of causality, it seems legitimate to explore those similarities to see what light chaos theory can throw on the issue of how a causal path of practice can lead to an uncaused goal. This is not to equate Buddhism with chaos theory, or to engage in pseudo-science. It's simply a search for similes to clear up an apparent conflict in the Buddha's teaching.

And it so happens that one of the discoveries of non-linear math—the basis for chaos theory—throws light on just this issue. In the 19th century, the French mathematician Jules-Henri Poincaré discovered that in any complex physical system there are points he called resonances. If the forces governing the system are described as mathematical equations, the resonances are the points where the equations intersect in such a way that one of the members is divided by zero. This, of course, produces an undefined result, which means that if an object within the system strayed into a resonance point, it would no longer be defined by the causal network determining the system. It would be set free.

In actual practice, it's very rare for an object to hit a resonance point. The equations describing the points immediately around a resonance tend to deflect any incoming object from entering the resonance unless the object is on a precise path to the resonance's very heart. Still, it doesn't take too much complexity to create resonances—Poincaré discovered them while calculating the gravitational interactions among three bodies: the earth, the sun, and the moon. The more complex the system, the greater the number of resonances, and the greater the likelihood that objects will stray into them. It's no wonder that meteors, on a large scale, and electrons on a small scale, occasionally wander right into a resonance in a gravitational or electronic field, and

thus to the freedom of total unpredictability. This is why meteors sometimes leave the solar system, and why your computer occasionally freezes for no apparent reason. It's also why strange things could happen someday to the beating of your heart.

If we were to apply this analogy to the Buddhist path, the system we're in is samsara, the round of rebirth. Its resonances would be what the texts called "non-fashioning," the opening to the uncaused: nibbana. The wall of resistant forces around the resonances would correspond to pain, stress, and attachment. To allow yourself to be repelled by stress or deflected by attachment, no matter how subtle, would be like approaching a resonance but then veering off to another part of the system. But to focus directly on analyzing stress and attachment, and deconstructing their causes, would be like getting on an undeflected trajectory right into the resonance and finding total, undefined freedom.

This, of course, is simply an analogy. But it's a fruitful one for showing that there is nothing illogical in actively mastering the processes of mental fabrication and causality for the sake of going beyond fabrication, beyond cause and effect. At the same time, it gives a hint as to why a path of total inaction would not lead to the unfabricated. If you simply sit still within the system of causality, you'll never get near the resonances where true non-fashioning lies. You'll keep floating around in samsara. But if you take aim at stress and clinging, and work to take them apart, you'll be able to break through to the point where the present moment gets divided by zero in the mind.

GLOSSARY

Arahant: "Worthy one; pure one." A person who has mastered the kamma that puts an end to kamma, and thus is not destined for future rebirth.

Bodhisatta: A being destined for Awakening. After his Awakening, the Buddha used this term to refer to himself prior to his Awakening.

Deva (devatā): Literally, "shining one." An inhabitant of the heavenly realms.

Dhamma: (1) Event; action; (2) a phenomenon in and of itself; (3) mental quality; (4) doctrine, teaching; (5) *nibbāna* (although there are passages describing nibbāna as the abandoning of all dhammas). Sanskrit form: Dharma.

Nibbāna: Literally, the "unbinding" of the mind from passion, aversion, and delusion, and from the entire round of death and rebirth. As this term also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. "Total nibbāna" in some contexts denotes the experience of Awakening; in others, the final passing away of an arahant. Sanskrit form: Nirvāṇa.

Sangha: The Community of the Buddha's followers. This term has two levels of meaning. On the conventional level it refers to ordained monks and nuns. On the ideal level, it refers to all those—lay or ordained—who have reached at least the first of the four levels of Awakening.

Tathāgata: Literally, "one who has become authentic *(tatha-āgata),"* an epithet used in ancient India for a person who has attained the highest religious goal. In Buddhism, it usually denotes the Buddha, although occasionally it also denotes any of his arahant disciples.

Vinaya: The monastic discipline.

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Sabbe Satta Sada Hontu
Avera Sukha-jivino.
Katam Punna-phalam Mayham
Sabbe Bhagi Bhavantu Te.

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Free From Animosity.
May All Share In The Blessings
Springing From The Good That We Have Done.

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